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staunch airport ally, sponsored the rally and announced plans for a letter-writing campaign targeted at the FAA and a recruitment effort to mobilize pro-airport forces at the September public hearing.

The commission's efforts will be coordinated by a group co-chaired by John Roach, chairman of Fort Worth-based Tandy Corp., and Rodger Meier, a Dallas businessman who once headed the D/FW Airport board.

Roach and Meier delivered upbeat speeches yesterday and were answered by applause from the enthusiastic crowd assembled in a banquet room at the Harvey Hotel in Irving.

"The opposition will be out in force, and we must be sure that our supporters are too," Meier said. "We cannot assume that someone else will make sure the right thing happens."

The proposed $3.5 billion airport expansion has generated opposition in Grapevine, Euless and Irving because of fears that increased airplane noise would hurt the cities' quality of life and business climate. The three cities have hired consultants to lodge complaints with the FAA.

But yesterday's rally raised the possibility that pro-D/FW forces are poised to fight the battle through public relations.

Ken Billett, president of Concerned Citizens to Control Airport Noise, an Irving homeowners group, said his organization has been frustrated during the past couple of months by an inability to take any action until the environmental study was released.

Billett said his group will meet within the next week to begin laying plans for countering the North Texas Commission's campaign. An effort will be made, he said, to at least to organize a show of opposition at next month's public hearing.

Until the study was released, Billett said, "we were held prisoner. We really couldn't do anything constructive."

The study showed that the expansion would expose hundreds of residents to increased airport noise. D/FW has outlined a $150 million program to purchase or soundproof houses, apartments and other facilities.

Grapevine officials, who have hired a public relations firm for their fight with D/FW, are considering whether to respond publicly to the environmental study before their consultants' work is done.

But the leader of another opposition group, Gene Hoopes, yesterday said his organization might be silenced by D/FW's pledge to purchase 1,600 Grapevine and Euless homes if buyers cannot be found any other way.

Although Hoopes said he must study that program further, he said, "If it works, I think it will be satisfactory."

Organizers of yesterday's pro-airport rally vowed to further pre-empt expansion opposition — at least in the public eye — using a theme of regional economic prosperity through D/FW.

Roach said it is especially important that representatives of the business community voice support for the airport expansion, which he called the Metroplex's most important business development of the 1990s.

"If we allow it to become obsolete," he said of the airport, "we will short-circuit not only our future but our children's future."